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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MR. JACKMAN'S WORK ¹

JAMES H. TUFTS

It is at once a limitation and a source of strength, growing out of our common life, that no work and no personality can be judged in itself. We can estimate it rightly only as we see it in its relations to the larger human society, or the movement of human life in which it is placed. This is particularly true of the work and personality of the teacher. The teacher brings to the child or the riper student some part of the thought and life of society as it now is. In this he is therefore dependent for his resources upon the knowledge and culture of his time. But in what he selects and in his adaptation of this to the possible development of the child lies his opportunity to be in turn a contributor. If he can not merely apprehend the mass of material which civilization is constantly gathering and casting aside, but can also discern the movement, the direction, of the process; if he can sense, however imperfectly, what knowledge is of most worth; if he can glimpse what way progress lies; most important of all, if, amid the rival clamors of the liberal and the practical, of sciences and arts, of classicists and realists, he can remember that all these are for the child, and not the child for them, he has an opportunity to be of real service in the larger movement of humanity. However small his individual part may be, it gets permanence and worth as it becomes incorporate in the common life.

Mr. Jackman was connected with three great movements of education. The first claimed his activity when a teacher of science in Pittsburg—the movement to introduce the teaching of the newest science, already established in schools and colleges, into the secondary schools. To the second movement his work at the Cook County Normal School was an important contribution—

¹ Read at the memorial service held in the Leon Mandel Assembly Hall, University of Chicago, January 30, 1907.

the movement which included the study of nature as one of the agencies through which the school life was made to center its emphasis upon a free and full development of the child. The third movement is that for the bringing into mutual relation the work of the university with that of the training of teachers. Mr. Jackman had much to do with bringing about the union of the School of Education with the University of Chicago. This work, however, is still in its beginnings. It is to the work of the second period of his life that we naturally look at this moment, as it is the most conspicuous.

The introduction of nature-study into elementary schools had two aspects. It was, in the first place, a bringing of new material into a very meager and formal course of study. To anyone who has watched the active mind of a child the theory seems almost incredible that eight years, five days in the week, and five hours a day, were necessary to enable the child to deal with symbols of language and symbols of number, with perhaps a little geography and history that were necessarily almost as purely symbolic. To give the child some conception of the world in which he lived, of the material which has so enlarged and enriched all our modern views, was then in itself a sufficient reason for the introduction of the new study.

But this soon came to be only one phase of a larger movement. The average parent, as Mr. Jackman remarked in a recent editorial in the *Elementary School Teacher*, is too apt to think of his child's education as merely a process of fitting the child for something else—for college on the one hand, or for business on the other. There is undoubtedly a sense in which it is true that the life of the child is a preparation for the life of man or woman, but those who have lived with children feel that in another and very profound sense, if there is any part of human experience which pays as it goes—which is not a means to something else but is itself valuable and priceless—it is the life of the child. The biologists have recognized that it is an advantage for the evolutionary process that heredity is not too rigid. It is in the accidental variations, whether minute or large, that the opportunity for progress lies. Our educators have been slow to recog-

nize that the same holds good in the field of social heredity and social progress. To impose upon the child all the learning and traditions of society in science, in art, in morals, in religion, is to leave too little room for the variation of the child's own free spontaneity to assert itself; and it is in the happy variation that may be found in this child or in that child that the hope of human progress lies, as surely as it lies also in the painful and laborious conquests of the gradual advance of organized thought and purpose. When this began to be more fully appreciated and realized, the significance of studies in the curriculum took on a new interpretation. The study of nature came at once to have a prominent place, not merely because a knowledge of nature might be useful as a means to something else, but also because it was seen to be indispensable as a part of the necessary environment in which the child could live.

Mr. Jackman succeeded in his task because of three things. In the first place, he had a great love of nature and much ingenuity in finding ways to bring this home to children. In the second place, he loved boys and girls. These two facts made his work at Pittsburg so successful that Colonel Parker thought him the man for the new work to be done. In the third place, he had a large conception of the value of the study of nature. It meant, first of all, giving the child new material and imagery with which the mind might grow. Our schools, he said, squeezed the life out of children. They take them eager, full of questions, they give them only symbols and abstract, formal methods; they starve the minds and leave them poorer than when they came. The great variety which sky and earth, plant and animal, natural processes of change and movement afford, gives rich imagery and material, and suggests an expression in turn through a great variety of means. But, again, knowledge of nature means freedom from superstition. Our physical life is endangered, our mental horizon is limited, by ignorance of the world in which we live. The child has a right to be freed from these dangers and limitations. And, finally, the study of nature was by Mr. Jackman considered to be a means through which the child might come into actual, real, and moral relations with his universe; to

obey the laws of nature through which we gain strength and power, to control the forces of nature and thus become master in some measure of our world, to recognize at once our limitations and our relations to the whole is of positive moral, as well as intellectual, value. It prepares one in some sense for the more effective relationship to human society through which we become efficient agents in its progress.

To one who, with Lessing, conceives all human progress from its rudimentary and barbarous beginnings up through its successive struggles and achievements as an "education of the human race" the work of the teacher has dignity and worth. When one has passed from the ranks his colleagues pay to the sincere co-worker their tribute of honor and respect.